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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5385
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3917
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1206
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3988
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3074
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7870
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5524
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0324
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2216
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001016

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS
MCC FOR D NASSIRY AND E BURKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/19/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: COLOMBO CELEBRATION MARKS VICTORY IN THE EAST

REF: A. COLOMBO 977
[1](#)B. COLOMBO 971
[1](#)C. COLOMBO 946

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires James R. Moore, for reasons 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. On July 19 the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) held a ceremony in Colombo's Independence Square to celebrate the military victory in the East. The U.S., United Kingdom, and India sent their Defense Attaches to observe, while many countries opted not to attend at all. The President's speech, full of emotional and patriotic language, touted the military's success as a victory over terrorism and scolded those who have criticized the victory. He urged political parties not to delay the All Parties Representative Committee (APRC) process. The President announced provincial and local Government elections in the East by the end of the year, and promised to launch a "development war" to bring economic prosperity to the region. His criticism of the Cease-Fire Agreement's designation of territory to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) implies that he will continue efforts to take back LTTE areas. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On July 19, the GSL held a ceremony in Colombo's Independence Square to celebrate the military victory in the East. The armed services presented the President with a parchment officially declaring the victory, and he was honored with a 21-gun salute. This was followed by a speech from the President, helicopter and Kfir jet fly-overs, and a military parade of over 800 troops. Maritime and army special forces received standing ovations from local spectators as they marched past.

Key Countries Opt for Military Representation

[1](#)3. (C) After consulting other embassies and Washington, Post sent the Acting Defense Attache as the U.S. representative. The United Kingdom, representing the European Union presidency, India, and Japan did the same. Korea, Qatar and

Kuwait were among the countries that sent Ambassadors. Most other European countries, Australia, Canada, Russia and Pakistan did not attend.

President Touts the Victory, Scolds Detractors...

¶4. (U) The President's speech, full of emotional and patriotic language, touted the military's success as a victory over terrorism. He announced that the "demonic forces of terror... have been completely driven away," and that this was accomplished with "minimum harm to the people." He rejected the idea that the majority had conquered the minority and gave credit to the Tamil and Muslim people for paving the way for the victory. He argued that the LTTE's defeat was much more than a military victory and that the clearing of the East was a "debunking of the myth" that the LTTE was entitled to territory. In a sharply critical, if oblique, reference to the Cease-Fire Agreement signed in 2002, he said Sri Lanka was the only country in the world where "the criminal act of conceding a legal area of control to terrorists has been implemented through an agreement."

¶5. (U) The President scolded those who have criticized the military and urged them not to raise "false slogans and... engage in globe-trotting to betray the Sri Lankan State" (a thinly veiled reference to Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe). He insisted that while safeguarding human rights is "our primary responsibility... one must understand clearly the difference between human rights and terrorist activities." He said he sees "an attempt to bury the victories of our troops by insulting them or leveling serious

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charges against them."

... While Pushing for Political and Economic Follow-Up

¶6. (U) The President hailed the APRC process as an effort to find a political solution to the conflict and urged parties not to delay any further. He said a "suitable framework to bring the Tamil-speaking people more into the process of political power" was needed and that the framework should be "sensitive and responsive to the genuine grievances of the people in the North and East." He announced that, in an effort to return basic civic rights to the people of the East, "we will conduct provincial and local government elections in the East by the end of the year." He added that the GSL would "launch an all-out development war, giving priority to agriculture" to restore "economic freedom" to the East. The President declared his confidence that the international community would step in to help rebuild the East.

¶7. (U) The President closed with an emotional appeal to the Tamil people. He expressed his "deepest regrets for that tearful history which was thrust upon" them, and he said "I have accepted the great responsibility for your future and that of your children."

¶8. (C) COMMENT: There were no security incidents during the ceremony, and no protesters were present. The absence of any western Ambassadors likely sent a strong message to the GSL that the international community does not support a military solution to the conflict. The President's speech overstated the security situation in the East by claiming that the Tigers have been completely cleared, and understated the impact of the fighting on the population of the East, where tens of thousands of IDPs remain. His criticism of the Cease-Fire Agreement's designation of territories implies that he will continue efforts to take back LTTE-controlled areas. He endorsed the APRC process, yet undermined it by announcing provincial elections in the East. (Note: This directly contradicts previous assurances to us by Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa that only local, and not

provincial, elections would be held this year, so as not to preempt APRC decisions on devolution, ref c). An election in the Eastern province would formalize the de-merger of the North and East, which is highly contentious and would have to be one of the subjects of any peace negotiations. In any case, if provincial elections are held soon, government critics will be quick to suspect an attempt to legitimize Karuna and install him as a proxy power in the East (ref a).

MOORE